

Update from Scrutiny Chairman to Cabinet: 22 March 2016

This report provides an update from the following scrutiny meetings:

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 2 March 2016

Scrutiny Committee – 9 March 2016

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 2 March 2016

1. The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on [2 March 2016](#), when it considered evidence and made recommendations in respect of the following items:

Agenda Item 5 – Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services

2. The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, and the Director of Children and Young People's Services, to note and take account of the following comments and suggestions from the Committee in formulating the Council's Action Plan in response to the Ofsted report:
 - a) Staff, Members and partner organisations are to be congratulated for the good work that Ofsted have recognised in their inspection report.
 - b) Councillors would welcome opportunities to meet staff working in their localities and to appreciate their good work.
 - c) Continue the engagement with Leeds, the Eastern Regional network and other councils to learn from best practice with a view to improving the rating for both 'Children who need help and protection' and for 'Experiences and progress of care leavers'.
 - d) Further develop the use of peer audits, to get the culture embedded in the organisation.
 - e) With regard to the educational performance at Key Stage 4 of looked after young people,
 - (i) undertake further modelling to identify trends and causes of the downturn in outcomes in 2015, in the light of Suffolk's generally upward trends
 - (ii) consider further integration of the virtual school and children in care endeavours with SCC's Education & Learning services, and
 - (iii) seek learning from schools' case studies regarding KS4 care leavers
 - f) Accelerate the pace of deployment of digital tools; examine the merits of making one-off investment on the IT and care management system to achieve the goals of providing suitable technology to support the workforce and integration of numerous sources of data.

- g) Redouble efforts with partners, in particular schools and academies, to embed the multi-agency strategy on neglect, to ensure effective and early action in cases where neglect is established of children and young people.
- h) Ensure that the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) addresses the Ofsted recommendations, including regarding the systematic use of cross-agency data to inform service and demand planning.

Agenda Item 6 – Foster Carers

- 3. The Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Cabinet, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills, and the Director of Children and Young People’s Services, to:
 - a) Request that all councillors support publicising the Council’s fostering campaign, including at town and parish council meetings and community events and meetings.
 - b) Ensure that councillors have access to a pack of information, including the new material, posters, literature and website to be launched in April, the link to the YouTube video clip shown to the committee, and the SCC and Fostering service Facebook pages.
 - c) Consider promotion opportunities via school governing bodies, eg. information in Governors magazine.
 - d) Engage with district and borough councils to agree an arrangement for prompt assessment of people who require larger social housing accommodation in order to become foster carers, taking account of the outcomes of the detailed assessment process.
 - e) Engage with Suffolk public sector leaders and with schools to look at the cost benefits of joint commissioning of foreign language / interpreter services, and also consider alternative face-to-face interpreter options including the possibility of direct employment.
 - f) Consider additional specialised support and encouragement for carers who may be able to accommodate Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
 - g) Provide additional information for the Committee regarding the numbers (not percentages) of children and young people looked after by independent foster carers, carers outside the county, in neighbouring authorities, and ‘at a distance’.

Agenda Item 7 – Children’s Centres

- 4. The Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills, and the Director of Children and Young People’s Services, to:
 - a) When referring to Children’s Centres, to make clear the locality in which they are situated, and to make the distinction between the references to registration areas, the children’s centre and the physical buildings.
 - b) Provide additional information for the Committee regarding the service engagement data across all of the Suffolk children’s centres, and also the ‘run rate’ of crisis intervention at each centre.

- c) In order to be able to measure the effect of any future building closures, to reflect on the statistics being collected both before and after closures, so that the consequences on registrations; casual/informal visits to centres; take up of programmed events; and crisis interventions (eg debt/domestic violence/relationship breakdown) can be more clearly understood.
 - d) Provide additional information for the Committee for its Information Bulletin, to explain the term “registration reach area” associated with each of the Children’s Centres, including a map.
5. The minutes of the Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee meeting will be formally agreed at the Committee’s next meeting on 9 June 2016.

Scrutiny Committee – 9 March 2016

6. The Scrutiny Committee met on [9 March 2016](#), when it considered a report at Agenda Item 5, summarising scrutiny development activities which have taken place in the last nine months and setting the background for a workshop session. The workshop provided the Committee with information on a range of key strategic issues and activities identified as themes during meetings between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee with members of the Corporate Management Team in late 2015.
7. The Committee received presentations from lead officers covering the following topics:
 - The County Council’s approach to consultations;
 - Progress towards digitalisation and website improvements;
 - The County Council’s IT Strategy – current position, usage/benefits, future plans;
 - Progress with Supporting Lives Connecting Communities;
 - The use of Assistive Technology in helping people to remain independent
 - Fire Service collaboration with other emergency services
8. For each of the above topics, officers gave a presentation and answered members’ questions. A copy of the presentations the Committee received is available at:
<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/LoadDocument.aspx?rID=0900271181b7160e>
9. Members and officers then broke into discussion groups to consider what, if any, scrutiny’s role should be in adding value to this work, how scrutiny could make an impact, the key areas for review and who should be involved. The outcomes from the table discussions will be used to inform the development of the Committee’s forward work programme for 2016.
10. The minutes of the Committee meeting are due to be confirmed at the next scheduled meeting on 4 May 2016.